

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5757

As of February 16, 2007

Title: An act relating to fairness and equity in health professions licensing fees.

Brief Description: Regarding fairness and equity in health professions licensing fees.

Sponsors: Senators Pridemore, Zarelli, Oemig, Roach, Fraser, Kohl-Welles and Kline.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 2/15/07.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Staff: Edith Rice (786-7444)

Background: Current law requires that the costs attributed to the licensing or regulation of the various health professions be borne by the members of that specific profession or occupation. This is accomplished through the assessment of credentialing fees. Health care professionals must pay an initial application fee, and once credentialed, pay a renewal fee on a regular basis.

The amount of the fees varies by profession and is dependent upon how many credentialed license holders there are for the particular profession. Those professions with many members pay fees that are less than those professions which have fewer members.

The Department of Health, Health Professions Quality Assurance (HPQA) collects these health profession fees which are subject to the legislative appropriation process. The Legislature must then grant authority for HPQA to spend the fees it has collected.

Summary of Bill: The cost of each profession or occupation licensing program must be borne by the members of every profession except that the Secretary of the Department of Health will set fees for all certified health professions equally and at a sufficient level to cover the costs of administering the certified health profession programs.

The Secretary of the Department of Health will set fees for all registered health professions, so that the fees are equal for all registered health professions and set at a sufficient level to cover those costs.

Finally, the Secretary of the Department of Health will set licensing fees equally for all licensed health professionals, at a sufficient level to cover those costs of administration.

Appropriation: None.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The current fee schedule makes it prohibitively expensive to be a licensed midwife. There has been a 25 percent decrease in the number of midwives in the state in the last four years. The fees go up, so more midwives leave. Midwives educated here are choosing to leave the state because of the licensing fee issue. It is impossible to serve the low income refugee community if fees continue to be high.

CON: It is essential that the costs to administer licensing and discipline for each profession be borne by each profession. It is already hard to get the proper funding to do discipline as it should be done. Ideally, the commission should be an independent entity.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Pridemore, prime sponsor; Nick Federici, Midwives Association of Washington; Audrey Levine, Midwives Association of Washington; Cheryl Murfin Bond, Mel Parsons, Seattle Midwifery School.

CON: Brad Tower, Optometric Physicians of Washington; Carl Nelson, Washington State Medical Association.